

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,
Key City Gas Company Warehouse
10 Bluff Street
Dubuque
Dubuque County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-AY

HABS
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
13-AY-

**PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Buildings Survey
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver Colorado 80225

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Site Location: 10 Bluff Street
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 4.8
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'
Lot description: City Lots 585, 585A, 585B,
and 585C and North 55' of
City Lot 584

Present Owner: Iowa Department of Transportation
Present Usage: vacant
Present Condition : fair

Orientation : southwest

Architectural Description : Plan type : rectangular; one / two stories.
Structure : wood frame with masonry bearing walls.
Ext. walls: brick laid in common bond.
Roofs : flat composition roof with brick parapet walls
over one-story section; moderately pitched side
gable with asphalt shingles over two-story
section.
Chimneys : brick exterior chimney on side wall of one-
story section.
Windows : wood 2/2 double-hung on one-story section;
12/12 double-hung on two-story section; all
with segmental brick arch heads and stone lug
sills.
Openings : single-leaf entrance offset on front of one-
story section; entrance and sectional loading
doors on south side of two-story section; all
doors with plain board enframements and loose
lintels or segmental arch heads.
Details : modestly corbeled brick courses on parapet of
one-story section.

Construction Date : c.1868; c.1900

Architecture Style: Nineteenth Century Functional

Physical History : In 1853 the City of Dubuque granted a gas supply franchise to Barker and Spellman of Cleveland. They incorporated a year later as the Dubuque Gas Light and Coke Company. The firm began construction of its first coal gasification plant, located on the northwest corner of Dodge and Locust streets, in the autumn of 1854, and completed it in 1858. In 1868 the company moved its operation a half block west to the corner of Dodge and Bluff streets. In 1863 the Key City Gas Company opened a Main Street business office; in 1897 the firm completed a second coal gasification plant on Pine Street.

A 1911 gazetteer reported: "The gas company's plant occupies over five acres of land and employs over half a million of capital. The [gas] distribution system which is supplied by three gas holders, having a storage capacity of 660,000 cu. ft., comprises 55 miles of gas mains, the largest and deepest in Iowa. There are about 5,000 consumers supplied, taking a total of over 125,000,000 cubic feet of gas per year. Four thousand families in Dubuque cook with gas, which is now universally preferred for domestic fuel. Besides gas, the company manufactures domestic coke, a considerable part of which is sold and shipped to western cities. It, also, ships large quantities of coal tar and of concentrated ammoniacal liquor. The gas company carbonizes over 15,000 tons of Youghiogheny coal per annum, and the traffic on its railroad spur tracks is the largest on the Dubuque division." The Dodge Street plant was closed by then, although the structures remained. Sanborn maps indicate that the single-story office portion of the present building predates 1884; the two-story rear section was constructed between 1891 and 1909. This warehouse and office building are the only remaining buildings from the gas plant. A nearby service station is located on the former site of the gasometer.

Significance: Though greatly altered, this building is historically important in its association with one of Dubuque's earliest public utilities.

References: Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.
Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1884, 1891, 1909, 1972.
Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory: 1882-1923.
Dubuque County Assessment Record: 4-6-10-1 and 4-6-10-2.
Iowa Department of Transportation, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Cultural Resources Assessment."
The Industries of Dubuque: Her Relations as a Trade Center, Business Houses and Manufacturing Establishments (Dubuque: J.M. Elstner and Co., 1887).
Dubuque: Its Manufacturing and Commercial Facilities, Together with Its Railroads, Public Buildings, Business Growth and Future Prospects (Dubuque: The Times Company, 1886), page 36.
H.W. Gardner, *Greater Dubuque* (Dubuque: Times Journal, 1911), page 40.
Mark Lynch, "Key City Gas Company," unpublished report located at Loras College Library, Dubuque, Iowa, n.d.
Dubuque Telegraph-Herald: 23 May 1904; 23 March 1913; 6 August 1933.

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